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Chairman: Mr. KRENKEL (Austria)

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* Items considered together.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

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(b) HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS (continued) (A/47/24 and Add.1, A/47/353, 434, 479, 501, 502, 503, 504, 552, 626, 630, 668, 701 and 702)

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AGENDA ITEM 149: THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ESTONIA AND LATVIA (A/47/247; A/C.3/47/9)

1. Mr. ERMACORA (Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights), introducing his eighth report on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan (A/47/656), in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1992/68 and Economic and Social Council decision 1992/240, said that, following the resignation of the former President of Afghanistan, Mr. Mohammed Najibullah, the five-point peace plan proposed in 1991 by the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, had not been implemented. Although the transfer of power between the former Government and the new Islamic Government had begun in relative calm, factional fighting had soon broken out, with disastrous consequences for human rights and security in the country. The new Afghan Government had abrogated all laws and decrees issued since 1978 in so far as they were considered to be in contradiction with the principles of Islam. He had been unable to obtain information about the laws still in force, and believed that the matter should be examined on a case-by-case basis. He had attempted to evaluate the compliance of Afghanistan with its international obligations and commitments with regard to human rights in general and international human rights instruments in particular, especially the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Despite the change of Government, the international personality of the country had not been altered; therefore, Afghanistan was required to respect its international obligations. The Afghan Government had recently confirmed its commitment in that area by submitting a report to the Committee Against Torture and by adopting the Final Document of the Tenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-aligned Countries, in which that principle was reaffirmed.

(Mr. Ermacora)

2. Since his last report to the General Assembly, he had been able to visit Afghanistan and the neighbouring provinces of Pakistan twice. However, he had been unable to visit Kabul during his latest visit in September 1992, because of the prevailing insecurity in the capital, and he had experienced great difficulty in contacting the central Government. In drafting the report, he had relied on his visits to Balkh and Nangarhar provinces, as well as numerous written and oral reports received during the reporting period.

3. The situation of Afghan refugees constituted one of the major problems from the standpoint of human rights and humanitarian law. More than a million refugees had returned to the country within the space of a few months, and if the flow of refugees continued at the same pace, it was estimated that the repatriation of all refugees would be completed before the end of 1994. Nevertheless, the situation of some 4 million Afghans remaining abroad was still of concern. Their return would depend on continued international assistance, a concerted international effort to complete mine clearance operations throughout the country, and increased humanitarian assistance to refugees, which had been declining over the past few years. It was also contingent upon political developments in the country, especially political stability. The human rights situation in Kabul illustrated the situation in the rest of the country. However, as the capital, Kabul also symbolized the country's sovereignty, independence and integrity. Although it had been relatively spared during the fighting which had taken place between 1980 and 1992, Kabul was currently at the centre of a new conflict.

4. The change of Government in April-May 1992 had not been accompanied by systematic human rights violations. The power struggle was a continuation of the political struggle which had been going on for years between the parties formerly based in Peshawar. Law and order no longer prevailed in Kabul, and there had been innumerable reports of looting, rape and killings. With regard to the human rights situation, notably the right to personal liberty, it should be noted that all prisoners had been released from Pol-i-Charkhi Central Prison and all death sentences had been commuted to prison terms before the new Government's accession to power. The new Government had declared a general amnesty, the working of which, unfortunately, was ambiguous. He had been informed that most former civil servants up to the level of deputy minister had remained in their posts but it appeared that a certain number had been detained and were being interrogated. However, neither he nor the International Committee of the Red Cross had been able to visit places of detention. It had not been possible to obtain precise information regarding the cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment mentioned by Amnesty International in recent reports, or to determine whether torture was systematically practised. The problem of Soviet prisoners had not yet been solved, and allegations continued to be made regarding the presence of Afghan children in the territory of the former Soviet Union. He also drew attention to the fate of the former President of Afghanistan, pointing out that the latter, too, should benefit from the amnesty declared by the new Government, or, at least treated fairly.

(Mr. Ermacora)

5. No mass executions had been reported since the fall of the former Government, but several persons had been killed arbitarily after having been tortured. The right to life had generally not been respected and a number of death sentences had been pronounced and carried out in Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad. While realizing that Islamic law did not exclude capital punishment, he believed that the procedures under which the death sentence was imposed and carried out must be in conformity with international commitments, and particularly with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. He would endeavour to study in greater depth, in his report to the Commission on Human Rights, the problems that might arise owing to discrepancies between the rules of Islamic law and international human rights instruments.

6. Owing to the climate of insecurity prevailing in the capital since the change of Government, it had not been possible to effectively enjoy the rights to freedom of expression, information and assembly. With the advent of winter, the people would not be able to enjoy economic and social rights unless substantial assistance was forthcoming from the international community. He expressed his full support for the appeal for $17.6 million for emergency assistance for the winter of 1992-1993 that had been made by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. With regard to the right to self-determination, some progress had been made. Since Soviet troops had been withdrawn, the country was free to determine its political status. However, all attempts to convene a Loya Jirgah had failed because of the ongoing conflict. The present Government lacked democratic legitimacy and, although attempts had been made to convene bodies modelled on the Shura or council, those bodies had not been representative of all segments of Afghan society. The situation was made worse by the fact that not all refugees had returned, that a number of groups claiming political power were not willing to share it, and that local commanders did not want to cooperate with anyone under the present circumstances. General elections had been announced, but it would be pointless to attempt to hold them until peace and stability returned to the country.

7. He emphasized that the situation of human rights in Afghanistan must remain a major concern of the world community and the United Nations. He was surprised that there had been no word about the situation in Afghanistan in the Secretary-General's Report on the work of the Organization (A/47/1).

8. Mr. VAN der STOEL (Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights) noted that his interim report on the situation of human rights in Iraq was in two parts (A/47/367 and Add.1), the second part being justified by the alarming information he had received from various sources in July 1992 regarding troop movements in southern Iraq, shelling and air raids. He had also learned that implementation of the Third River Project was being stepped up; that could have a large impact on the people of the region for much of the marsh area was being drained. Not only might that change the population's cultural habits but it also would permit vehicular traffic and therefore

(Mr. Van der Stoel)

enable Iraqi security forces to better control the region, with predictable consequences for opponents of the regime hiding in the marshes. The Iraqi Government alleged that the presence of bandits in the region made the operations necessary, but in view of the means employed, he wondered whether the intention was not rather to overcome a resistance the regime considered unacceptable.

9. In his interim report, he had recommended that teams of observers be sent into the region, but the Government had emphatically rejected the suggestion on the grounds that it would be an unacceptable infringement of Iraq's sovereignty. Certainly, observer missions were not the answer always and everywhere, but in cases of serious human rights violations, such as those which were occurring in Iraq, they were justified. It seemed inappropriate to speak of infringement of sovereignty in the case of Iraq, since in every other part of the world journalists enjoyed freedom of movement and were free to criticize; moreover observers were invited to monitor elections in other countries without that being seen as an infringment of their sovereignty.

10. In August 1992, the southern marshes had been declared a no-fly zone, and there was no sign of any major military operation such as had been reported during the summer. However, he had heard from a variety of sources reports of intermittent shelling and villages being burnt.

11. In the second part of his interim report (A/47/367/Add.1), he had emphasized the economic situation and economic and social rights, in particular the right to food and to health. The situation in the southern marshes, in the north and also in the southern areas controlled by the Government was alarming.

12. In a statement to the Security Council on Monday, 23 November 1992, the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, underscoring the difficulty of obtaining food for the Iraqi population had gone as far as to term the Security Council sanctions as genocide. However, food and medication had from the beginning been exempted from the sanctions against Iraq. Moreover, resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991) contained provisions for Iraq to sell oil so as to buy food for its people, with a ceiling of at least $900 million. For that to occur, it would be sufficient for the United Nations and Iraq to come to an agreement, but negotiations for that purpose had come to nothing and there was no indication that the Iraqi Government would seek to reopen them.

13. Moreover, the memorandum of understanding between Iraq and the United Nations concerning humanitarian aid had expired on 1 July and the hope that it might be extended had come to nothing. On the contrary, a campaign of harassment (various incidents and threats) had been mounted against United Nations personnel participating in the humanitarian operations; it was hard to believe that it had been a spontaneous outburst of popular anger, as Iraq claimed, since the majority of the incidents had occurred in areas under Government control, including several at government checkpoints. In addition,

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non-governmental organizations taking part in the humanitarian operation had been discouraged from carrying on their operations and visas were no longer being issued or extended.

14. The Government of Iraq had also subjected the people of the marshlands and, increasingly, of the north and other regions not controlled by the Government, to an internal embargo on fuel and food. Thus, while complaining bitterly of a food embargo decreed by the United Nations - when none existed - the Government did not hesitate to use food supply as a weapon against certain elements of its own population, even though it had stated, in its note of 23 January 1992 (E/CN.4/1992/31), that it would not exercise any discrimination in food distribution between the various regions of the country.

15. After intensive negotiations, on 22 October a new Memorandum of Understanding had been concluded between the United Nations and the Government of Iraq in which Iraq pledged to take all measures necessary for facilitating the safe and rapid passage and delivery of aid throughout the country. It appeared that Iraq was beginning to honour that obligation, as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs had announced on Monday, 23 November, that fuel had been beginning to arrive in the north of the country, and it had been hoped that 20 million litres of kerosene could be delivered; nevertheless, that amount was still a far cry from the 47 million litres considered necessary to cover the needs of the 3.1 million inhabitants of the region. At best, i.e. if the Government of Iraq were to honour its obligations to the full under the Memorandum of Understanding, the population of Kurdistan would still be suffering. Given the slightest delay in supply, or if the Government of Iraq balked in fulfilling its obligations, thousands of individuals would pay with their lives, and that would be a violation of the most important right provided for under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: the right to life. It could only be hoped that enough food could be successfully delivered to avoid disaster, and that would require a major contribution from donor countries to finance the rest of the operation. Otherwise, the world would know whom to hold responsible.

16. With respect to the general situation of political rights in Iraq, unfortunately, no sign of liberalization of the regime could be detected, despite all the urgings made and all the resolutions adopted on that issue. Any person demonstrating his or her disagreement with the policies of the Government was risking his or her life. Outside of the official judicial system, there was an extrajudiciary system which relied on security forces who were entirely free to arrest and to kill whomever they wished.

17. Mr. NIKKEN (Independent Expert of the Commission on Human Rights) noted that the beginning of the year 1992 had witnessed the signature at Chapultepec of the Peace Agreement between the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), after 10 years of armed conflict. The Peace Agreements were intended not only to put an end to the armed conflict but also to eliminate the causes of conflict, by building a

more democratic and harmonious society in which respect for human rights would be one of the fundamental responsibilities of the State. His mission afforded a unique opportunity to provide assistance in human rights matters to the Government of El Salvador, to consider the human rights situation there and also to study the effects of the Peace Agreements on the effective enjoyment of human rights. The report on the situation of human rights in El Salvador (A/47/596) emphasized precisely that aspect of the question, because only by implementing and honouring the Peace Agreements could a solution be found for the systematic violations of human rights in that country. Peace was viewed as an irreversibly won right, but he regretted that implementation of certain provisions of the Agreements had not proceeded according to the timetable. It was for that reason that the ending of the military structure of the FMLN had been deferred until 15 December 1992. He reminded both parties that fulfilment of their mutual obligations under the Peace Agreements should proceed according to the originally set timetable, so as not to upset the balance of the set of Agreements.

18. The cessation of hostilities had eliminated an important cause of threats to human dignity and had produced a climate more conducive to respect for the rights of individuals. In addition, a climate of peace offered the greater stability needed to exercise economic, social and cultural rights. However, as the report of the Secretariat and that of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) indicated, situations persisted in which human rights were violated not only in the civil and political spheres, but also with respect to economic, social and cultural rights, and the resources available to society with which to combat them were still very weak. Implementation of the Peace Agreements presupposed the creation or strengthening of appropriate structures to ensure compliance by the Salvadorian State with its duty to observe and safeguard human rights and to eliminate some of the causes which in the past had most led to systematic violations. The new structure should rest on three pillars: the Office of the National Counsel for the Defence of Human Rights, which would be responsible for the promotion and the defence of human rights; the National Civil Police, whose primary function would be to protect and safeguard the free exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, would be conceived in terms of a truly democratic, modern, police force, integrated in civilian society, rather than engaged in confrontation with society; and a reformed judicial system which would be more independent, effective and capable of guaranteeing due process of law and determining the liability of persons guilty of serious human rights violations. However, since the Office of the National Counsel for the Defence of Human Rights had embarked on its activities, it had not had the strength, resources and clarity of purpose necessary to make its presence felt. In addition, the organization of the National Civil Police had departed at certain points from provisions of the peace agreements. With respect to the judiciary system, reforms introduced to date had not been sufficient to overcome the structural defects affecting the administration of justice in El Salvador. The verticality of the system threatened the intellectual freedom of judges and the independence of lawyers. The reform of the armed

(Mr. Nikken)

forces which was to result from the implementation of the Peace Agreements must prevent human rights violations in the future. The constitutional reforms, and the agreements reached regarding the doctrine and educational system of the armed forces, stressed the subordination of the institution to civilian authorities and their commitment to a State based on the rule of law and the pre-eminance of respect for human dignity. That was an extremely sensitive issue, since it presupposed a rapid transition by the armed forces to a new model of a democratic society that had emerged from the Agreements.

19. ONUSAL had put forward a large number of recommendations on subjects directly concerning the observance and safeguarding of human rights. He noted with some concern that most of those recommendations had yet to be implemented, notwithstanding the two parties' commitment, in the San José Agreement (A/44/971-S/21541), to give them their earliest consideration and the instructions of the President of El Salvador to give priority to their implementation. If the current situation continued, the situation of human rights could not improve; the human rights component of the ONUSAL mission would lose its purpose, and the credibility of ths process as a whole would be undermined. Therefore, he strongly urged that the recommendations made in the report, and those put forward by the commissions set up under the Peace Agreements should be implemented as soon as possible. Rapid implementation should also be obtained with respect to the recommendations put forward by the ad hoc commission instructed to evaluate the officer corps of the armed forces with the aim of purification, as well as those recommendations that would be put forward within the time limits by the Commission on the Truth following its current investigation of acts of violence committed in the past that were of particular interest to the public.

20. He thought that the Government should take maximum advantage of the presence in El Salvador of the United Nations Observer Mission (ONUSAL) Human Rights Division, whose highly trained professionals could provide the Government with immediate assistance, enabling it to make substantial progress in the observance and safeguarding of human rights. More than ever, it was also necessary to renew the Special Rapporteur's appeal to the rich countries to provide the assistance they had promised to the Salvadorian people.

21. Mr. YOKOTA (Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights) said that he had been appointed to examine the situation of human rights in Myanmar in accordance with Commission resolution 1992/58 and that his appointment had been approved by Economic and Security Council decision 1992/235. His first task had been to "establish direct contacts with the Government and with the people of Myanmar". On 23 July 1992, he had submitted a letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar requesting the cooperation of the Government and expressing his wish to visit the country as soon as possible, which he had been invited to do by a letter of the Minister dated 27 August 1992. That visit, for technical reasons, had had to be postponed: it would be from 7 to 15 December 1992. Although regrettable, the postponement would allow him also to visit Thailand and Bangladesh and to

(Mr. Yokota)

speak with refugees and others there about the human rights situation in Myanmar. The results of his mission would be reflected in his final report to the Commission on Human Rights.

22. On 7 September 1992, he had submitted a memorandum to the Minister for Foreign Affairs (contained in chapter III of his preliminary report (A/47/651)). In it, he had requested information on the preparations for the National Convention for drafting a new democratic constitution, scheduled for 9 January 1993; on the situation with regard to leaders of political parties against whom action had been taken in 1992, including a list of the persons detained and those released; on the ratification of major human rights instruments; and on the situation of the Muslim population in Northern Arakan State.

23. On 23 and 26 October, the Government of Myanmar had sent him detailed responses to those questions (see chapter IV of the preliminary report).

24. In addition to his contacts with the Government, he had sought to obtain information from other sources, including reports of human rights violations in Myanmar received by the Centre for Human Rights (summarized in chapter V of the preliminary report) and interviews with individuals wishing to provide oral evidence on the condition that their identity would be withheld. He had also met with staff members of the United Nations, human rights organizations and humanitarian non-governmental organizations and with journalists and lawyers, among others.

25. The information obtained from those non-governmental sources appeared to indicate that many human rights violations had been and continued to be committed. They included extrajudicial executions, particularly of forced porters; disappearances, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; arbitrary detentions, including those of political leaders such as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; the suppression of fundamental freedoms and the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, including the Muslim population in Northern Arakan State.

26. In its responses - specifically in its note verbale of 26 October 1992 - the Government of Myanmar indicated that it considered most if not all of those allegations to be untrue and unfounded. During his visit to the region in December, he would try to determine the actual situation, given the wide discrepancy between the allegations and the Government's responses.

27. Developments in Myanmar had occurred since the spring of 1992 which could have affected the human rights situation. In April 1992, the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh had signed an agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Muslim refugees. However, it appeared that only a minority of those 250,000 refugees had returned to Myanmar. In the same month, the family of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had been authorized to visit her. In August 1992, universities and other institutions of higher learning had been reopened under

(Mr. Yokota)

certain conditions, and the Government had announced that Myanmar had acceded to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, although not to Additional Protocol II. In September 1992, the Government had rescinded some martial law orders, leaving others in force. It had also lifted the curfew. Lastly, according to the list provided by the Government, 39 of the 68 political leaders in detention had been released since April 1992.

28. While those developments might have implications for the situation of human rights in Myanmar, he realized that they might be purely cosmetic. For that reason, he would focus on those points during his visit, during which he hoped to receive the cooperation of the Government of Myanmar.

29. Mr. MAZOWIECKI (Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights), introducing his report (A/47/635), said that he was gravely concerned about the situation of human rights in the former Yugoslavia. While history allowed a partial understanding of the situation, there was no explanation for the massive violations of truly fundamental human rights. Ethnic cleansing was the goal, not the consequence, of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Muslims and Croats were being forced to leave their native lands in order to create ethnically pure regions. The atrocities committed in those regions constituted a violation not only of the fundamental rights proclaimed in the international human rights instruments but also of the human rights set forth in the Geneva Conventions and the optional protocols.

30. As a result of his mission, he could confirm the observations in his first report to the Commission on Human Rights, namely, that, although the suffering affected people everywhere, it weighed heaviest on the Muslim population, which was threatened with extermination. Those primarily responsible were the Serbian political and military leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, backed by the authorities of the Republic of Serbia and the command of the Yugoslav national army. The objectives of their policy had been largely achieved, since Muslims and Croats were fleeing the regions under Serbian control and thousands of people were being detained in camps.

31. Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina had also been victims of serious human rights violations that should be strongly condemned. In Croatia, such violations were occurring on a smaller scale both in areas controlled by Serbian forces and in those where United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) troops were stationed. However, Serbs who opposed the policy of nationalism and hatred were also subject to reprisals. Evidence showed that war crimes had been committed in the territories of the former Yugoslavia since the beginning of the conflict. In accordance with Security Council resolution 780 (1992), a Commission of Experts had been established to investigate those crimes. That Commission must be able to carry out its mandate quickly; in other words, to identify and prosecute those guilty of war crimes under international law.

(Mr. Mazowiecki)

32. The human rights situation in the Republic of Serbia was a matter of deep concern, particularly with respect to the Albanians in Kosovo, who were subject to discriminatory practices; to the Croats, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Slovaks and other minorities in Vojvodina and to the Muslims in Sandjak, who were being targeted for ethnic cleansing and forced to emigrate.

33. The problem of human rights in Serbia encompassed not only the situation of ethnic or national minorities, but extended also to the political rights of the Serbian population itself. Indeed, the media - television, in particular - were controlled by the Government, and the democratic opposition had no access to them. But human rights were also being violated in the Republic of Croatia, where discriminatory measures based on nationality were aimed chiefly at the Serbian population. The scale of the tragedy suffered by the civilian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially Muslims, demanded rapid and coordinated action. Prisoners must be freed and the detention camps closed. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) must therefore persuade States to take in the prisoners, even though that in itself was not an adequate solution. Furthermore, there was an urgent need to establish conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina that would allow the local population and the refugees to survive. To that end, the creation of security zones under the control of UNPROFOR troops in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) seemed essential. The fear that the establishment of such zones was tantamount to an acceptance of the policy of ethnic cleansing must yield to the duty to save human life. Such a solution, although temporary, was preferable to inaction, which amounted to outright acceptance of that policy's consequences. Similarly, it was essential that corridors should be established rapidly through which humanitarian relief could be channelled to the towns and regions under siege.

34. In his report, he demonstrated unequivocally that the international presence had not yet succeeded in halting the massive violations of human rights in the former Yugoslavia. However, the United Nations personnel currently serving there were to be commended. The establishment of permanent observer missions of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Vojvodina, Kosovo and Sandjak might have a deterrent effect. In addition, the appointment of representatives of the Special Rapporteur in the areas of the former Yugoslavia would make it possible to obtain information on human rights violations more systematically and to respond to them more rapidly.

35. The role of the international press was also to be commended. Mobilizing public opinion in support of human rights was of crucial importance. Substantial technical and financial assistance should therefore be given to the independent, democratic press. Serious consideration should also be given to the establishment of an international press agency.

36. The events in Bosnia and Herzegovina demanded that the States Members of the United Nations should demonstrate the necessary political will to deal with the situation.

37. Mr. RICHARDSON (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, referred to his statements to the Committee on implementation of human rights instruments, under agenda item 97 (a), and on racism and self-determination under agenda items 91 and 92, and also to the statement made to the General Assembly by Mr. Douglas Hurd in his capacity as President of the Council of Ministers of the European Communities. The fundamental principles underlying the Universal Declaration and the International Covenants on Human Rights must take precedence over domestic laws and cultural or religious convictions. At no time since the founding of the United Nations had it been so urgent to mobilize the international community in defence of human rights. While the relationship between human rights, democracy and development was an idea currently recognized by all emphasized by the Secretary-General in his "Agenda for Peace", the world was witnessing a proliferation of ethnic disputes and instances of militant nationalism which, particularly in the former Yugoslavia and in Somalia, had led to internecine strife marked by a total disregard for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Such brutality tore society apart, opening the field to demagogues, warlords and, in the most extreme cases, to horrors such as "ethnic cleansing".

38. The World Conference on Human Rights to be held the following year at Vienna could not be more timely. It would give States an opportunity to renew their commitment to uphold the Universal Declaration and the International Covenants; it was to be hoped that the Conference would lead to practical measures. Respect for human rights, which were indivisible, the rule of law and democratic institutions were essential to active, free and meaningful participation in the development process while, conversely, development centred on the individual was essential for the promotion of democracy.

39. Existing mechanisms to guarantee respect for human rights had to cope with an enormous workload. It was to be hoped that restructuring would lead to ways of strengthening the Centre for Human Rights, which was the focal point of those mechanisms, and to provide it with the resources it needed to provide the necessary services to the treaty bodies and technical assistance aimed at helping countries prepare their reports, or at implementing global programmes in the context of the third decade to combat racism and racial discrimination, and to follow up the achievements of the World Conference.

40. On behalf of the European Community and its member States, he commended the work of the thematic rapporteurs and working groups and welcomed the decision of the Commission on Human Rights to renew their mandates for three years and to convene a special session on the former Yugoslavia. He expressed the hope that other innovative ideas might be put forward to strengthen the human rights bodies, and improve coordination among them.

41. The growing number of requests for electoral assistance was an encouraging sign, given that the right to choose one's Government was a fundamental human right. It was therefore essential to strengthen the

(Mr. Richardson, United Kingdom)

capacity of the Organization and establish guidelines for its activities in that area.

42. Many citizens of the world continued to need protection from the very Governments which ought to be their strongest shield against violations of their rights. The draft declaration on the protection of all persons from enforced disappearance was thus an importnat document, as was the draft declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, which he hoped to see adopted unanimously by the General Assembly after many years of difficult negotiation.

43. Given the valuable role played by many non-governmental organizations, it would be advisable for the Commission on Human Rights to speed up its drafting of a declaration designed to protect human rights defenders.

44. It was intolerable that, more than 65 years after the adoption of the Slavery Convention and despite the efforts of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, nearly 100 million people, including many children, were still enslaved. All States must redouble their efforts to eradicate the practice of slavery, which was an affront to human dignity.

45. The situation of street children, whose numbers were constantly on the increase, was another scandalous situation against which urgent action had to be taken. The European Community had submitted a draft resolution on that subject and hoped that it would command universal support.

46. He then presented the views of the European Community and its member States on the human rights situation in various countries, starting with those that had been dealt with in reports by special rapporteurs.

47. The European Community condemned the policy of "ethnic cleansing", under which massive violations of human rights - killings, rapes, beatings, the destruction of houses, threats, illegal detention, mistreatment in detention camps and forced expulsions - were being carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, principally by Serbian groups, against the Muslim population. Those persecutions must cease and the perpetrators brought to justice. The European Community and its member States were at the heart of efforts within the United Nations system and the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia to tighten the monitoring of human rights violations in the former Yugoslavia and improve the collection of data. The Community condemned the attacks on staff of the United Nations and UNHCR and of ICRC and other non-governmental organizations and on members of the Community's monitoring mission. The international community's response must match the severity of the crisis which, while most serious in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was also affecting other parts of the former Yugoslavia, particularly Vojvodina, Kosovo and Sandjak.

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48. In Iraq, despite Security Council resolution 688 (1991) and the International Covenants, the Government continued to persecute the inhabitants of the southern marshes through indiscriminate bombardment, arbitrary arrests, detentions and executions, the denial of medical care and a diversion of water supplies that threatened their ancient way of life. In the north, outside the United Nations protected areas, the Kurdish population continued to suffer repression and hardships resulting from an internal economic blockade. The European Community and its member States urged Iraq to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by Security Council resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991) to export oil in order to import humanitarian goods. The extraordinary situation would justify the extraordinary measures recommended by the Special Rapporteur, namely the deployment in Iraq of United Nations monitors.

49. According to the report of the Special Rapporteur and other sources, numerous violations of human rights continued to be committed in the Islamic Republic of Iran: the execution and systematic torture of political prisoners, brutal suppression of peaceful demonstrations, persecution of religious minorities (particularly the Baha'i community, members of which had suffered summary execution and confiscation of property) and suppression of freedom of thought, expression and association. The Government had not repudiated its call for the murder of Mr. Salman Rushdie, and it had refused to cooperate with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General or authorize the return of the ICRC personnel expelled earlier in the year. More than 10 years after submitting its initial report, the Islamic Republic of Iran had at last submitted its second periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to the Human Rights Committee. Unfortunately, as noted during the debate in that Committee, the report did not accurately reflect the situation in the country and raised questions about the implementation of the Covenant there, particularly with regard to the treatment of women and ethnic and religious minorities.

50. There were continued reports of massive human rights violations in Myanmar, too: arbitrary execution, torture and imprisonment; the banning of politicians elected by the people in 1990; the detention of the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; forced resettlement programmes; and the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities. Despite a degree of progress - the release of more than 1,000 political prisoners, the lifting of the curfew, the revocation of certain powers under martial law, the abolition of military tribunals and the reopening of universities and colleges - it was doubtful that so circumscribed a National Convention as the one announced for 1993 would be sufficient to ensure national reconciliation and an end to arbitrary action. The authorities must cooperate with the appropriate United Nations agencies and programmes to facilitate the repatriation of refugees, and the many ethnic problems must be solved on the basis of full respect for the rights of minorities, for despite the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar to the General Assembly, the armed offensive against minority groups had recently been resumed.

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51. The European Community condemned the many human rights abuses - detention without trial, torture, abduction, murder, and suppression of the freedoms of speech and association - committed in Haiti since the coup d'état and called for the prompt restoration of democracy and peace in that country; the Community fully supported the efforts being made by the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States to that end.

52. At its current session, the General Assembly had for the first time received a report on the situation of human rights in Cuba. Unfortunately, the Cuban Government had refused to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur and continued to violate the provisions of the Universal Declaration, notably by imposing harsh prison sentences on members of the opposition and advocates of peaceful change and by organizing mob action against human rights activists. The European Community and its member States called on the Cuban Government to honour the agreement concluded in 1988 with ICRC providing for periodic inspections of Cuban prisons, to stop obstructing the efforts of the Special Rapporteur and to restore a truly democratic society founded on political pluralism as soon as possible.

53. The European Community and its member States were deeply concerned about the loss of life and displacement of people which had taken place following the collapse of the Communist regime in Afghanistan, as well as the fate of the persons of any nationality who remained unaccounted for since the war and of the prisoners held by the mujahidin. They called on the Government of Afghanistan to follow up the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur, since respect for human rights would be a powerful tool for rebuilding the country and would facilitate the repatriation of refugees.

54. The report of the Independent Expert and other sources, including the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), indicated that the ending of hostilities in El Salvador, had not put a stop to human rights abuses there such as the unwarranted use of force, intimidation, illegal and arbitrary detention, death threats against trade unionists and church workers, and extrajudicial killings. It was possible, however, that the latter might reflect the alarming rise in common crime, and the Salvadorian Government had apparently made a firm commitment to prevent and punish violations of human rights. The work of the Commission on Truth, the newly created Office of the National Counsel and the Ad Hoc Commission, as well as the role played by the former Secretary-General and the current Secretary-General, were all highly commendable.

55. The countries covered by specific reports were not the only ones in which human rights were being violated. In Europe, although the breakup of the former Soviet Union had improved the situation in many of its territories, it had given free reign to ethnic tensions and created newly vulnerable groups in others. Such rivalries had led to the outbreak of civil war, particularly in the Republics of Georgia, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. The European Community urged those Republics to respect human rights, particularly the rights of

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minorities, and to settle their differences in a peaceful manner consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and the International Covenants on Human Rights.

56. In Turkey, the Government had undertaken to improve the protection of human rights, but the situation remained a matter for concern, as indicated in particular by the findings of the Committee against Torture and reports on the conditions in Turkish police stations.

57. The establishment of a democratic Government in Albania was to be welcomed, and it was to be hoped that progress in the area of human rights, particularly minority rights, would continue.

58. Cyprus was a European country whose tragic division entailed worrying violations of human rights. The Security Council had repeatedly affirmed that the status quo was unacceptable. The European Community and its member States strongly supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to find a just and viable solution and reiterated the importance which they attached to the restoration of the unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cyprus in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 774 (1992) and the high-level agreements.

59. The peace process in the Middle East begun at the Madrid Conference was at last giving grounds for hope of a comprehensive political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the establishment of a climate of respect for human rights. The situation of the Palestinians in the occupied territories remained a source of concern, not only because of the suffering and loss of lives but also because of the economic and social stagnation, which affected young people above all. The recent moves by the Israeli Government to improve the human rights situation in the occupied territories were welcome, in particular the decision to cancel the deportation order announced in December 1991, as the Security Council had requested in resolution 726 (1991). It was to be hoped that Israel would build on those measures and end such practices as detention without trial, collective punishment, and destruction and confiscation of property and that it would implement in full the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

60. Reports of disappearances, arbitrary arrests and torture remained common in Syria, where the freedoms of expression and assembly were strictly curtailed. However, encouraging progress had been made over the past year, including the release of political prisoners and the lifting of travel restrictions on the Syrian Jewish community. The European Community and its member States urged the Syrian Government to make further efforts along those lines and to comply with the International Covenants; it might begin to demonstrate its good intent by giving improved access to detainees by lawyers and independent observers.

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61. The European Community and its member States hoped that the Taif Agreement and the undertakings associated with it would bring about the restoration of the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon, free of all non-Lebanese troops. They called on all the parties to cooperate with UNIFIL and the other United Nations personnel in Lebanon and to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

62. The situation of human rights in China, including Tibet, was dismaying; many Chinese citizens committed to democracy, especially those involved in the peaceful demonstrations in 1989, were serving heavy prison sentences, and various ethnic, cultural and religious groups were suffering repression. The European Community and its member States believed that the international community was entitled to express its concern about the human rights situation in China, including Tibet, without that amounting to interference in China's internal affairs, and they appealed to the Chinese authorities to grant an amnesty to political activists and political prisoners and to guarantee respect for human rights in accordance with international standards.

63. The situation had improved in Cambodia following the Paris Agreements, which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNTAC were endeavoring to implement, and it was to be hoped that it would improve still further with the signature of a number of international covenants and agreements by all the factions in the Supreme National Council. The situation remained worrying, particularly in the areas still controlled by the Khmer Rouge, which refused to implement the peace agreements in full. The Khmer Rouge was called upon to reconsider its decision not to cooperate in the cease-fire or participate in the elections.

64. In North Korea the Government continued to deny its citizens many of the fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration and the International Covenants; it was urged to comply with international human rights standards.

65. The fact that the Indonesian authorities had opened an inquiry into the violent incidents at Dili was welcome, but it was regrettable that the number of people killed or unaccounted for was still unknown; it was also regrettable that the same sentences were not imposed on the military as on civilians and that human rights organizations were denied access to the territory. The European Community and its member States urged the Indonesian authorities to honour their commitments and respond fully to the consensus statement adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and to treat all detainees humanely, including opposition figures; they fully supported the Secretary-General's recent initiative to achieve a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement of the question of East Timor, one which respected the legitimate aspirations of the people and the principles of the United Nations Charter.

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66. The human rights situation in Kashmir continued to deteriorate as a result of the violence. The terrorist violence must be resisted, but that did not exempt the Indian security forces from the duty to respect the rule of law. The Indian Government was urged to allow humanitarian and international human rights organizations to make an independent assessment of the situation. It was encouraging that the Indian Government intended to set up a national human rights commission. And it was to be hoped that the Governments of India and Pakistan would refrain from any action which could aggravate the tension. The Government of Pakistan was urged to prevent violent interference from territory under its control.

67. In Sri Lanka improvements had been made with respect to human rights and the rule of law; in particular the Government had invited the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and Amnesty International to monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in their recent reports. The Commission on Human Rights had adopted a consensus statement on human rights in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan authorities were invited to continue their efforts, and all the parties to the conflict, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were called upon to respect fully the universally accepted rules of humanitarian law.

68. Violations of human rights continued to be reported from the Chittagong Hills in Bangladesh. The European Community and its member States recognized that it was difficult to maintain order in that area of ethnic tension and they welcomed the recent publication of the findings of a judicial enquiry into the Logang incident, which had cost the lives of several members of indigenous tribes. The Government was called upon to implement the recommendations of the report and vigilantly protect the rights of minorities.

69. A number of citizens remained in detention in Viet Nam because of their political or religious beliefs. It was to be hoped that following the adoption in April 1992 of a constitution which provided for the safeguarding of human rights, they would shortly be released. It was encouraging that the Vietnamese authorities had shown an openness to dialogue and that they had promised to improve respect for many fundamental freedoms, in particular freedom of the press, assembly, travel and association. The Vietnamese Government had also made commitments regarding the repatriation of refugees.

70. In Africa, growing pressure was being exerted on behalf of democracy and respect for human rights; unfortunately, there was still much cause for concern. In the Sudan, there had been numerous instances of summary executions, detention without trial, torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading forms of punishment, as described in the reports of the Special Rapporteurs on torture and summary executions. The scale of those human rights violations had created severe humanitarian problems and a flow of refugees to neighbouring countries. The European Community and its member States condemned those violations, and in particular the alleged violence by Government forces at Juba and in the Nuba Hills. He called on the Government

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to uphold the human rights instruments to which it was a party and to guarantee all Sudanese citizens, regardless of their ethnic group or religious belief, full respect for the rights recognized in those instruments.

71. The appalling situation in Somalia was partly the result of the serious human rights violations committed over the years by the previous regime. If a lasting peace was to be achieved, the process of economic and social reconstruction had to be accompanied by a rebirth of tolerance and mutual respect. It was essential for all factions in the country to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council, to cooperate with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, ICRC and the humanitarian non-governmental organizations working in the country and to respect fundamental rights, including the right to food.

72. The European Community and its member States urged the parties to the conflict in Liberia to observe the cease-fire called by the summits of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) on 20 October and 7 November and to implement the Yamoussoukro IV Accord so that the population could return to peace and enjoy human rights, united under a freely elected Government.

73. In Ethiopia, the Government had pledged to respect human rights which had been grossly violated by the previous regime; however, it was still necessary to put an end to the ethnic clashes that persisted in some parts of the country. The decision by the General Assembly to endorse the establishment of a United Nations observer mission to monitor the referendum in Eritrea should be welcomed.

74. The human rights situation in Malawi still left much to be desired; even peaceful opponents of the Government were persecuted. The Government's decision to hold a referendum on multiparty politics was a welcome development.

75. In Equatorial Guinea there were still reports of arbitrary arrests, torture and the harassment of opposition politicians. The European Community had expressed concern to the authorities and had invited the Government to cooperate with the United Nations Expert and to implement his recommendations.

76. The Niger and Mali were still riven by ethnic strife, although in Mali, the signing the previous April of the National Pact held out hope for a settlement to the conflict. In Chad, the human rights situation had begun to improve, thanks to the efforts of the authorities and of national and international non-governmental organizations.

77. Serious human rights abuses had taken place in Zaire during the recent period of political instability. The European Community and its member States reiterated their support for the efforts made by the transitional Government and the National Conference and called on all political forces in Zaire to work together for peaceful and fair elections and social and economic recovery.

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78. Although the position of the European Community regarding South Africa had been dealt with at length during the debate on racism and racial discrimination, it was appropriate to restate the Community's deep revulsion to apartheid. The Third Committee would continue to scrutinize the human rights situation in South Africa until a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa had been achieved. During the period of political transition, it was more important than ever for the Government to safeguard the human rights of all citizens and to take all possible measures to avert further violent incidents such as those at Boipatong and Ciskei and for all the parties involved to abide by the terms of the National Peace Accord. In that respect, the Goldstone Commission had played a valuable role in identifying the causes of the violence.

79. Turning to Latin America, he said that the Twelve welcomed the progress in regional integration, the consolidation of democracy and the improvement in the human rights situation. However, that situation remained, a matter for concern in Guatemala, where, according to the Independent Expert, the armed forces were involved in human rights abuses and the situation of the indigenous population was very grave. The current negotiations between the Government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) and the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Rigoberta Menchu gave reason to hope for an improvement in the near future, especially since the Prize had been awarded on the eve of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People.

80. In Peru, violence continued to reign, and the country's report to the Human Rights Committee raised fears that compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights would not be possible in a regime in which the Executive had seized sole power. It was to be hoped that the election of a constituent congress would prove to be a step towards the early re-establishment of democracy.

81. Mr. SCHALLENBERG (Austria), speaking on agenda items 97 (b) and (c), was encouraged by the results achieved in the field of the promotion and protection of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the elaboration of a body of international human rights law, the establishment of various mechanisms to monitor its implementation, heightened public awareness of the issues on a world-wide scale, and provision of advisory services and technical assistance. Yet the gross and massive violations of human rights that continued to occur demonstrated the fragility of a system that was incapable of responding to very serious situations, as was exemplified by the carnage in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

82. Austria welcomed the fact that Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/48 authorized the Commission on Human Rights to meet between its regular sessions, in order to discuss urgent questions of particular gravity; but it was obliged to observe that that procedure was not very well defined and that it would be desirable for the Commission to be in a position to react without delay to an acute situation arising from gross violations of human rights. At

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its most recent regular session, the Commission had taken note of a detailed proposal by Austria regarding the establishment of such an emergency mechanism. His delegation hoped that the experience gained in dealing with the two cases where Council resolution 1990/48 had been invoked would convince all member States of the usefulness, and indeed the overwhelming necessity, of such a mechanism.

83. At the invitation of the Austrian Government, the General Assembly had decided to hold the World Conference on Human Rights - the idea for which had been launched in its resolution 44/156 - in Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993. Austria thus took particular interest in the thorough preparation and success of the Conference. Its objectives, set out in Assembly resolution 45/155 - a review of the progress made since 1948, an evaluation of the current system of protection offered by the United Nations, improved implementation of human rights instruments, enhancement of the competent mechanisms, examination of the link between development and universal enjoyment of all human rights, and provision of adequate resources for the United Nations human rights programme - had been adopted by consensus. It was thus surprising that the adoption of a draft agenda drawn up on the basis of those objectives had caused difficulties at the second and third sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference, and he was pleased to note that the delegation of Morocco had tabled a draft resolution (A/C.3/47/L.18), sponsored by more than 100 delegations, which contained as an annex a concise yet broad draft agenda, established on the basis of consultations with countries of all parts of the world.

84. The regional meeting held in Tunis, during which participating States had displayed a constructive attitude, and those soon to take place in San José and Bangkok, were of great importance. His delegation hoped that the draft resolution on the World Conference on Human Rights would be adopted by consensus, and that all Member States would contribute to ensuring a successful outcome for the Conference.

85. Civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other had long been known to be indivisible and interrelated. Lately, the relationship between human rights and development, which had also been highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization (A/47/1), had also been recognized. The connection between democracy and economic efficiency was becoming more and more apparent. In the current context, moreover, democracy did not mean the imposition of a particular model of government on other countries, but popular participation, good governance, public accountability and the rule of law. Consideration of that issue was thus of significance for the United Nations system as whole, and the World Conference on Human Rights could thus contribute to an integrated concept of the protection of human rights within the United Nations framework.

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86. Just as the International Conference on Human Rights, held in Tehran in 1968, had made it possible to proceed from promotion to increased protection of human rights through the establishment of monitoring mechanisms, the forthcoming Vienna Conference could mark the beginning of an era of prevention of abuses by addressing the root causes of the denial of human rights. Austria believed that the Conference should not confine itself to producing a general declaration, but should also lead to a clear commitment by countries to strengthen international cooperation, and to enhance the effectiveness of human rights activities and mechanisms, including preventive activities.

87. Expansion of training and technical assistance programmes would require a strengthening of the Centre for Human Rights, both financially and in terms of personnel. The effectiveness of all monitoring mechanisms was directly affected by the inadequacy of those resources. The allocation of funds to those mechanisms within the United Nations budget was currently highly unsatisfactory. The draft agenda for the Conference was thus right to give prominence to means of securing the financial and other resources necessary for United Nations activities in the area of human rights.

88. The World Conference should also ensure the universality, objectivity and non-selectivity of its consideration of human rights issues. It was essential to frame international standards so that they would be acceptable to a broad spectrum of cultures and ideologies. They must be based on the concept of humanity as an indivisible and pluralist unity. That point had already been made in the 1987 report of the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, which the General Assembly had endorsed in resolution 42/120. It had been enlightening to hear members of the Human Rights Committee explain before the Third Committee that the human rights treaty bodies had always maintained that the universal applicability of the human rights instruments was an indispensable prerequisite for their work.

89. His delegation drew the Committee's attention to the draft declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, which was the outcome of protracted and delicate negotiations stretching over more than a decade. The events that had taken place in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the situation of minorities in Serbia clearly demonstrated the importance of guaranteeing the rights of all ethnic groups living in a territory. Recent occurrences in various countries had proven that minorities must be enabled to participate effectively in the affairs of the country in which they lived. His delegation hoped that the draft declaration would be adopted without a vote and that it would then actually be implemented, so that situations of tension involving minorities could be overcome.

90. Mr. PERKINS (United States of America) said that he was pleased to announce that his Government had in 1992 ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but noted that, unfortunately, many Governments which had signed international human rights treaties nevertheless continued to

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violate human rights. The international community must therefore focus on seeing to it that the treaties were implemented. The United Nations played an important role in that regard by helping countries that were seeking to democratize. Yet it must also strengthen its ability to hold to account those countries that persisted in violating human rights. Moreover, the international community could not ignore the humanitarian tragedies currently unfolding in the world, like the starvation in Somalia or the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia.

91. Free and fair elections were only one element in the range of freedoms outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For people to be truly free, they must live where the rule of law and fundamental freedoms were respected. In that connection, his Government considered it especially appropriate that, on the eve of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, the Nobel Peace Prize had been awarded to Mrs. Rigoberta Menchu.

92. Surveying the situation of human rights in the world, his delegation noted with satisfaction that it had improved in some countries. In Cambodia, the Paris Accords signed in 1991 had paved the way for the repatriation of thousands. Much, however, remained to be done, and the Khmer Rouge's refusal to comply with its obligations under the peace accords was a matter of concern. In El Salvador, the United Nations-mediated peace talks had led to a cease-fire agreement, thus ending a bloody civil war. The considerable progress South Africa had made in dismantling apartheid was commendable. Nevertheless, the current situation was a serious cause for concern and there must be a speedy return to constitutional negotiations. The Governments of Botswana and Namibia had shown that they respected human rights, and Mali had carried out a successful transition to a democratically elected Government.

93. However, there were several countries where the human rights situation was so grave that it merited close scrutiny by the international community. His delegation called upon the Sudan, for instance, where there were serious human rights abuses, to cease forced relocations, respect international humanitarian law and give a full accounting of relief workers who had been executed or were missing. The war in the former Yugoslavia had introduced a new term to the vocabulary of human rights abuse: "ethnic cleansing". The United States condemned the violations of human rights by the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in other parts of the former Yugoslavia. There had no doubt been atrocities on all sides, but an overwhelming proportion had been committed by Bosnian Serb forces, who must be held accountable. Of course, not all the people of Serbia were to blame for what was being done in their name.

94. The United States supported all steps to bring an end to the fighting and the war crimes, such as the London International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, and the efforts of the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Mazowiecki, and it welcomed the establishment of the Commission of Experts on War Crimes. Iraq

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as well continued to crush the rights of its people. By refusing to implement Security Council resolutions 706 (1991) and 712 (1991), the regime of Saddam Hussein had shown its contempt for the rights of the Iraqi people. The United States was also concerned over the situation in Iran, and called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to release all political prisoners and end extrajudicial executions. In Myanmar, the military rulers still refused to respect the results of the May 1990 elections. His Government hoped that the promise made by the Myanmar Minister for Foreign Affairs before the General Assembly to allow the Special Rapporteur to visit Myanmar, would be honoured, and it called for the immediate release of Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi. The human rights situation in Cuba stood in strong contrast to that prevailing in Latin America, where there was a new generation of democratically elected leaders. The United States hoped that the Special Rapporteur would be allowed to visit Cuba. The Chinese Government's human rights practices also remained oppressive, falling far short of international norms. In addition, the regime in Equatorial Guinea continued to torture and arrest its critics.

95. Other countries had been reduced to anarchy and lawlessness. In Somalia, for instance, battles between armed factions provoked misery and starvation; in Liberia, a tenuous cease-fire had broken down and the country was again ravaged by civil war.

96. Elsewhere, once-democratic Governments had in the past year become less representative, as in Haiti, where the regime refused to respect the democratic process; in Peru, where democracy had suffered a blow when President Fujimori had instituted a coup in April; or in Algeria, where the electoral process had been interrupted. A number of countries around the world had attempted to come to terms with past human rights violations; and they were encouraged to persist in respecting fundamental freedoms. Although the human rights situation in Indonesia, especially in East Timor, remained of concern to the United States, it was encouraged by the Indonesian Government's initial response to the shootings in Dili on 12 November 1991. Similarly, the United States welcomed the preliminary steps taken by Chad, Malawi, Mauritania and Togo to improve respect for human rights, and it urged those Governments not to revert to repression. Despite the National Conference, the situation in Zaire remained a cause for concern, especially in the Shaba region.

97. The United States welcomed the CSCE decision's to establish the position of High Commissioner for National Minorities and to devote more attention to human rights issues like tolerance, migration and the role of the media. The World Conference on Human Rights would offer another opportunity for the international community to focus on intolerance and its causes, consequences and cures.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.